

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W

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R 011630Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8633

INFO AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 1880

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (HENRY A. KISSINGER) SF, IS

SUBJECT: MIDDLE EAST NEGOTIATIONS

REF: (1) JERUSALEM 658; (2) TUNIS 1679

1. SUMMARY: FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTI HAS EXPRESSED DEEP
ADMIRATION FOR SECRETARY'S RECENT PEACE MISSION IN MIDDLE
EAST AND BELIEVES THAT RESULTS WILL BE POSITIVE. CHATTI
APPRECIATES PRESIDENT FORD'S MIDDLE EAST POLICY AND
CONSIDERS THAT OPPORTUNITIES FOR MAKING PROGRESS RE
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ARAB-ISRAEL SETTLEMENT CONTINUE TO EXIST. GOT IS NOT

RPT NOT PESSIMISTIC AND ESTIMATES THAT EVEN ASSAD IS
READY TO PLAY BALL IF CONDITIONS ARE RIGHT. END SUMMARY.

2. FOLLOWING FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTI'S RETURN TO TUNIS
MARCH 31, AMBASSADOR SUCCEEDED IN CATCHING HIM MORNING
APRIL 1 BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE EVENING SAME DAY FOR IRAQ.
NOTING THAT WE HAD ALREADY CONVEYED ORALLY TO DIRECTOR OF
POLITICAL AFFAIRS SECRETARY'S MESSAGE OF MARCH 23, AMBASSADOR
GAVE CHATTI AIDE MEMOIRE CONTAINING TEXT, WHICH CHATTI
READ WITH GREAT CARE AND INTEREST.

3. AMBASSADOR IDENTIFIED FOLLOWING THREE ESSENTIAL POINTS
AS SUMMING UP CURRENT USG POSITION: (A) FOLLOWING RETURN
OF SECRETARY KISSINGER FROM MIDDLE EAST USG HAS CONCLUDED
THAT A PERIOD OF REEXAMINATION OF SITUATION IN MIDDLE EAST
IS REQUIRED; (B) USG COMMITMENT TO MOVE TOWARD PEACE IN THE
MIDDLE EAST REMAINS UNDIMINISHED; AND (C) WE ARE PREPARED
TO FOLLOW ANY APPROACH WHICH WOULD ADVANCE THIS OBJECTIVE,
INCLUDING PARTICIPATING IN LONG-PLANNED GENEVA CONFERENCE.

4. CHATTI ASKED THAT I CONVEY TO SECRETARY HIS AND
TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT'S DEEP ADMIRATION FOR THE COURAGEOUS
AND CLAIRVOYANT MANNER IN WHICH THE SECRETARY HAD GONE
ABOUT HIS TASK. GOT HAD FOLLOWED SECRETARY'S PROGRAM
CLOSELY. CHATTI SAID HE WOULD CERTAINLY NOT RPT NOT
CHARACTERIZE SECRETARY'S LATEST MISSION TO MIDDLE EAST
AS A FAILURE. ON CONTRARY, HE BELIEVED THAT SECRETARY'S
EFFORTS HAVE CREATED A POSITIVE ATMOSPHERE. SITUATION HAS
NOW BEEN CLARIFIED IN MORE REALISTIC FASHION, GIVING MORE
WEIGHT TO FUTURE EFFORTS. POSITIONS ON BOTH SIDES HAVE BEEN
BETTER DEFINED, AND THERE IS GREATER EVIDENCE OF ISRAEL'S
INFLEXIBILITY. EVERYONE IS NOW FORCED TO SIT BACK AND
REFLECT, INCLUDING AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION, U.S. CONGRESS,
EUROPE AND ISRAEL. USG DECISION TO REEXAMINE ITS MIDDLE
EAST POLICY IS WELCOME AND DESIRABLE AND HAS NOT DOUBT
BEEN FACILITATED BY SECRETARY'S RECENT MISSION.

5. CHATTI CONTINUE THAT PRESIDENT FORD'S STAUNCH
SUPPORT OF SECRETARY AND PRESIDENT'S OVERALL
POLICY TOWARD MIDDLE EAST IS GREATLY ADMIRERD AND
APPRECIATED BY TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT. SADAT'S STATESMANLIKE
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SPEECH AND HIS DECISION TO OPEN SUEZ CANAL ARE ALSO
POSITIVE FACTORS IN SITUATION. IN CHATTI'S VIEW, THERE
IS ADEQUATE TIME TO PREPARE SOBERLY FOR GENEVA CONFERENCE.
SECRETARY KISSINGER HAS EMERGED STRONGER THEN EVER. IT IS STILL
NOT TOO LATE MAKE SOME PROGRESS. CHATTI SAID HE CERTAIN THAT
SECRETARY WILL SUCCEED IN FURTHER EFFORTS. WHILE TUNISIAN
GOVERNMENT NOT NECESSARILY OPTIMISTIC, IT IS NOT PESSIMISTIC.
IT DOES NOT BELIEVE CURRENT SITUATION IS "DANGEROUS".

6. CHATTI AGAIN REITERATED HIS VIEW THAT PRESIDENT ASSAD OF SYRIA REMAINS A MODERATE FIGURE WHO WANTS PEACE. HE IS FORCED FROM TIME TO TIME, HOWEVER, TO PLAY TO ARAB GALLERIES, AS IN CASE OF HIS RECENT ADDRESS AT TOBRUK IN LIBYA. GOT REGRETS THAT IN THIS SPEECH ASSAD CALLED FOR IMMEDIATE ARAB UNITY WHEN THIS IS SO UNREALISTIC AND ASSAD KNOWS AS MUCH. CHATTI EMPHASIZED THAT ASSAD IS AFRAID OF BEING "LEFT ALONE", AND REMAINS RESPONSIVE TO PEACE INITIATIVES IF FAVORABLE OPPORTUNITY IS PRESENTED.

7. COMMENT: CHATTI IS OBVIOUSLY IMPRESSED BY TREMENDOUS EFFORT UNDERTAKEN BY SECRETARY TO BRING ABOUT SECOND STEP DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT AND CLEARLY IS NOT DISCOURAGED BY CURRENT LACK OF RESULTS. AS IN CASE OF TUNISIANS AS A WHOLE HE IS PINNING BLAME ON ISRAEL, CONTENDING THAT SADAT CAN NEVER AGREE TO PUBLIC UNDERTAKING OF NON-BELLIGERENCE AS LONG AS ISRAELI SOLDIERS OCCUPY EGYPTIAN SOIL. IN SHORT, TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO ROOT FOR OUR EFFORTS AND SEEMS TO BELIEVE THAT ULTIMATELY WE WILL SUCCEED.
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